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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how teachers and students assess the textbooks they use in history courses at the high school level in Turkey. The study included 61 high schools in 23 provinces representing the 7 geographic regions of Turkey. Through a survey questionnaire, teachers and students were asked their perceptions of the textbooks. Then a sub-sample of the teachers and students were interviewed to collect more in-depth data on their assessment of the textbooks. The results indicated that the textbooks assist teachers in instructional planning and in preparing examinations. However, the books were found to be ineffective to some degree in terms of physical aspects, content presentation and organization, language, teaching and learning aids, and impact on students. The textbooks focus mostly on transmission of knowledge. The texts were found to be ineffective in leading students to read the information with an interest, to develop an understanding of the content area, to develop thinking skills, and to foster positive attitudes toward the subject. Includes two tables of data and 14 references. (BT)

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An Assessment of High School History Textbooks in Turkey: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how teachers and students assess the textbooks they use in History courses at the high school level in Turkey. Through a survey questionnaire, teachers and students were asked their perceptions of the textbooks. Then a sub-sample of the teachers and students were interviewed to collect more in-depth data on their assessment of the textbooks. The results indicated that the textbooks assist teachers in instructional planning and in preparing exams. However, they are found ineffective to some degree in terms of physical aspects, content presentation and organization, language, teaching and learning aids, and impact on students. The textbooks focus mostly on transmission of knowledge, and they are found ineffective in leading students read the information with an interest and develop an understanding of the content area. They are found ineffective in developing students' thinking skills, positive attitudes toward the subject.

Introduction

This study is part of a three year long research project supported by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. The project aims to investigate social studies teaching from many aspects such as curriculum, teaching and learning process, textbooks and other instructional materials, student assessment, impact on students. This paper specifically focuses on the assessment of high school History textbooks through teachers' and students' perspectives. Three research questions guided the data collection and analysis: (1) How do teachers perceive high school History textbooks in terms of their various aspects? (2) How do students perceive high school History textbooks in terms of their various aspects? (3) What recommendations can be made for improving high school History textbooks?

Textbooks are probably the most frequently used instructional material in different levels of education. They communicate the course content to the teacher and the students, and become an important source in progressing toward the objectives of the course. In fact, in most elementary an secondary schools, nearly 80 percent of the knowledge to which students are exposed comes from the textbook (Solomon, 1978). This implicates that students spend a great deal of time with the textbook both for classroom activities and homework assignments.

Ideally, textbooks should be resources for teachers to use in designing instruction and for students to refer in learning the subject matter content. Textbooks provide some degree of content expertise for subject matter issues, a logical sequence of content, and a variety of support activities like questions, test items, cases, and summaries. They may help make the teaching content oriented and comprehensive, and allow more effective use of teacher time (Westbury, 1990). However, in many educational systems, textbooks have a controlling impact on what is taught in schools. Some researchers even argue that textbooks tend to be the primary influence on classroom instruction (Marker and Mehlinger, 1992). Teachers organize their instruction around the textbook, and for many teachers, selection of the textbook is the most important curriculum decision they make (Patrick and Hawke, 1982). Although there are some curriculum guidelines produced by states and local school districts, and textbooks tend to conform to them, teachers take these guidelines into consideration at a general level and make their practical curriculum decisions based on the textbooks they use. According to Venezky (1992), a textbook is a reflection of undocumented curriculum. Textbooks supply a substantial amount of content knowledge acquired by students (nearly 80%), and a substantial amount of student's classroom time (75%) and homework time (90%) is spent using the textbook (Raymond, 1980). As a result, textbooks become an important indicator of the quantity and quality of content in the actualized school curriculum (Patrick, 1988).

Wittrock's (1983) claims that text comprehension is based on the reader generating two kinds of relationships: (1) relations between ideas in the text and the reader's previous

knowledge and experiences, and (2) relations between parts of the text. Steinly (1987) elaborates further these two aspects of comprehending process.

> Readers must construct a web of relationships between text and their knowledge and experiences, an act in which comprehension depends upon the meanings of the text becoming highly integrated with the reader's previous knowledge structures. The reader must also construct a hierarchical structure that represent the ideas in the text as a coherent, self-contained whole, an act in which comprehension depends upon the reader's understanding the text as a separate message. These are two related but separate parts of the comprehending process (p. 115).

Moving from these two principles, Steinly offers two concepts, "relating" and "organizing, " to evaluate textbooks. Steinly states that textbooks can help students with comprehending the content by using certain rhetorical devices. The devices that would help students with relating skill include "good and frequent examples," "analogies when necessary," "a human voice behind ideas," "a good appropriate writing style," "vocabulary assistance and adequate explanations," and "good and useful illustrations" (p. 115). The devices to help students organize what they read include "proper headings and subheadings to help students construct hierarchical and logical relationships among ideas," "coherent sentences and paragraphs," and "properly located charts, graphs, and figures" (p. 115). Steinly claims that although more aspects can be added to these guidelines, the ones specified above can be considered as the minimum that one should expect from a textbook.

Turkish educational system is centralized in its many aspects like policy decisions, curriculum, approval of textbooks and other instructional materials, governance and inspection of schools, appointment and in-service training of teachers. Currently there are efforts to decentralize some of the components of the system. For example, independent authors are encouraged to write textbooks, and provinces have been given authority to appoint teachers within the province. Since the basic education covers the first eight years of formal education, high school education is optional in Turkey. General high schools aim to prepare students for university education while vocational high schools aim to equip students with some job skills and place a lower emphasis on general education than general high schools.

History is taught at all three grade levels in high schools in Turkey. The first two years covers Turkish history before the foundation of the Republic, and the European History. The last year covers exclusively the Republican Era. A separate organization for social studies courses (History, Geography, Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology) has long been adapted at the high school level because of the belief that it allowed a rigorous and intellectually demanding focus during instruction. This approach allows the strict control of the process and content of subject matter, and textbooks serve as the major element of structure in curriculum (Yildirim, 1994). Especially in History teaching, content becomes the driving force for the teaching and learning process in high schools. History is the only required social studies

course for high school students while the others, namely Geography, Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology, are elective.

Textbooks can be written by either the commissions formed by the Ministry of National Education (MONE) or independent authors in Turkey. However, in any case all textbooks have to be examined and approved by the MONE's Board of Education before they can be used in schools. The Board of Education is responsible for developing guidelines and criteria for the review and approval of textbooks and for appointing members to textbook examining committees (Ministry of Education Regulations, 1993). These committee usually include teachers, university professors and the Board of Education consultants. The textbooks written by independent authors or textbook writing committees appointed by the MONE are examined by the textbook examining committees which report to the Board of Education's council of experts. The council makes the final decision for approval. The most important criterion in the approval process is the conformity of the textbooks with the subject matter curriculum guideline produced by the MONE. Because of this strict approval process, the textbooks, whether they are written by independent authors or the MONE appointed committees, are quite similar to each other in terms of the selection and organization of the content, the treatment of topics, and the use of visuals. Mostly they differ on physical appearance and the details they provide on certain topics.

A textbook is inevitably the consequence of a variety of compromises that must be made to satisfy certain demands (Broudy, 1975) like curriculum guidelines and opinions of curriculum specialists, teachers, parents and students. Textbooks used in Turkish primary and secondary schools are influenced to a great degree by the curriculum guidelines developed centrally by the MONE whereas the opinions of teachers, administrators, and students are rarely taken into consideration. However, the usability and effectiveness of a textbook is very much dependent on a thorough analysis of audience (usable by whom?), purpose (for what purpose?) and context (under what conditions?) (Carter, 1985). A good analysis of these three aspects, and their reflection in the design of the textbook are likely to make the textbook more effective both for the teacher and students.

The majority of the schools sampled in this study (95%) used the History textbooks published by the MONE. In a typical MONE History textbook, there is an introduction explaining the units covered in the textbook, a table of contents listing the main topics and subtopics covered in the textbook, and finally a presentation of the topics as outlined in the MONE curriculum guideline. Each section in the textbook starts with a brief summary of the topic presented, and ends with study questions for students. The questions are at mostly knowledge level, and intend to help students review what they learn in each section. Illustrations (e.g., maps, pictures and charts) used to support the presentation of the knowledge are quite limited throughout the textbooks, and they mostly do not appear to be of good quality. The cost is the most important criterion for schools in choosing a textbook, and since the MONE textbooks are the cheapest, they are mostly picked by the schools as the main

textbooks. Teaching aids like teacher manuals, test books, workbooks, transparency sets accompanying textbooks are not common in the textbooks used in Turkish schools.

Teaching and learning process in social studies involves four major goals: knowledge, skills, values and participation (Ellis et al., 1991). These general goals are highlighted in the High School History curriculum prepared centrally by the MONE as well. However, it is unclear to what degree History textbooks contribute to achieving the main goals stated above. It is also unclear that how the textbooks are perceived, and used by both teachers and students. Relatively few researchers have examined the adequacy of textbooks in developing the major goals for teaching social studies, and teachers' and students' perceptions and experiences of these textbooks. In this sense, studying the perceptions of teachers and students about the distinctive characteristics of History textbooks, and the way the textbooks influence History teaching and learning process becomes important.

Method

The study design included 61 high schools in 23 provinces representing the seven geographic regions in Turkey. Of these, 50 were general and the remaining 11 were vocational high schools. Educational Research and Development Directorate of MONE selected the sample of schools representing the whole population based on the criteria given by the researcher. The criteria included proportional representativeness of seven geographical regions, of large and small cities, and of general and vocational high schools in Turkey. The main data sources were History teachers and students who were taking History courses at all three grade levels. While all teachers in the selected schools (in many cases one or two History teachers in each school) were asked to participate in the study, a systematic sampling technique was used to select students representing all grade levels. The files of the MONE indicated that there were 145 History teachers in the selected schools in the 1996-97 academic year when the data collection was carried out. Systematic sampling of students involved selecting the first five students (based on their ID numbers) in the first section of History course offered for their own grade level. This selection strategy was implemented for all three grade levels in 30 high schools randomly selected out of 61 schools nominated by the MONE for the study initially. Through this technique, a total of 450 students were identified to respond to the questionnaires for this study.

The questionnaires were mailed to one teacher in each sampled school. This person administered both teacher and student questionnaires and sent them back to the researcher. As a result, a total of 115 teacher questionnaires (a return rate of 79%) and 370 student questionnaires (a return rate of 82%) were secured for analysis.

Close to two-thirds of the teacher sample for the questionnaires (64%) were male. Half of the teachers (51%) had 11-20 years of teaching experience while one-fourth (24%) had 1-10 years, and one-fourth (25%) more than 20 years of teaching experience. The

majority of the teachers (86%) had a four year undergraduate degree while 11% graduated from a three year teacher training institute. Only few (3%) had master's or doctoral degrees. Close to three-fifths of the teachers (58%) taught 26-30 hours per week, and one-fifth (21%) taught more than 30 hours per week, indicating the heavy teaching load on a typical high school teacher. Close to half of the teachers (49%) had 31-40 students in their class, and close to one-third (30%) had 41-50. Only 13% had less than 30 students in their class. Still there were some teachers (8%) who had more than 50 students in their class. These numbers indicate that a typical high school classroom has around 35-40 students, and the size of the student group differed greatly in different high schools.

Student sample (N=370) represented all three high school grade levels to some degree. First graders made up 29% of the sample, while second graders 44% and third graders 27%. Of these students, 55% were male and 45% female. More than one-third of these students (36%) stated that in their first midterm in History course, they received 1 or 2, which is below average (out of 5 which is the highest grade one may receive at high school level), while 13% received 3 (average), and 51% received 4 or 5 (good and very good respectively). This variation among students indicates that sample represents students with different levels of achievement in History. In terms of students' general grade point average in all courses they take, the picture is somewhat different. Only 6% mentioned that their 'gpa' is 2, while 25% reported a gpa of 3 and 69% reported a gpa of 4 or 5. It appears that in general the students in the sample achieve lower in History than in their other courses.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to respond to the research questions in this study. Data collection methods included questionnaires for teachers and students, individual interviews with teachers and group interviews with students. Two separate questionnaires were designed for teachers and students to explore their perceptions of teaching and learning in History in various aspects including instructional planning, teaching strategies, learning materials, student assessment, etc. Both questionnaires included a set of questions on the effectiveness of the textbooks used in History courses, which provided the quantitative data for this paper. These questions aimed to explore teachers' and students' perceptions on the distinctive characteristics of these textbooks (e.g., physical appearance, content, language, teaching aids), how the textbooks influence the teaching and learning process, and the recommendations to improve these textbooks. Interview questions were structured in line with the general framework used in the questionnaires.

After the questionnaire data were analyzed, a sub-sample of students and teachers were selected in one city (Ankara) for convenience to investigate the research questions more in-depth. In four high schools in Ankara, eight teachers (two teachers from each school) were interviewed individually and 44 students (the first 5-6 students from the classes the teachers taught) participated in the group interviews. Out of eight teachers, six were male. All had more than 10 years of teaching experience. The number of students in their classes ranged from 25 to 52. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

The questionnaire data were analyzed through descriptive statistics while the interview data were subjected to content analysis. Using the themes in the questionnaires as a framework, the interview data were coded to identify related phenomena, to explore their relations to arrive at themes and to describe the data as a meaningful whole (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this purpose, first the data were coded based on the general scales used in the questionnaires. Second, the coded data which fit together meaningfully were grouped. These groups allowed the researcher to identify the main themes present in the data. Finally, the coded data were presented in relation to the results of the questionnaire data. In this way the general trends reached in the questionnaire responses were described more in depth within the context of the descriptive data provided by the interviewees.

Results

Results are organized in two sections. First section presents teachers' perceptions of the textbooks they use in teaching History are examined. Then, students' assessment of the textbooks are presented. In each part, both the questionnaire and the interview data are presented together. Interview results are presented in terms of general patterns explored among the interviewees rather than providing a tabulation of the frequency for each point made during the interviews.

Teachers' Perceptions of History Textbooks

In the questionnaire, teachers were asked to indicate their perceptions of the History textbooks they use through a number of items focusing on various aspects of the textbooks such as physical appearance, content selection and presentation, language, teaching and learning aids, impact on students and assistance to teachers. Table 1 presents teachers' responses to these items.

Table 1

Teachers' Views of Various Aspects of History Textbooks

ITEMS	Disagree (1)	Undecided (2)	Agree (3)	Mean	N
Physical Aspects					
Is durable.	25.9	32.1	42	2.16	112
Cover page is attractive.	25	40.7	34.3	2.09	108
Typesize is appropriate students.	25.9	40.2	33.9	2.08	112
Page layout is easy to follow.	28.2	52.7	19.1	1.91	110
Illustrations are attractive.	30.6	49.5	19.8	1.89	111
Content Selection and Presentation					
Topics are logically organized.	20.7	59.5	19.8	1.99	111
Content is clearly presented.	36.9	46.8	16.2	1.79	111
Fulfils course objectives.	38.2	49.1	12.7	1.75	110
Provides sufficient coverage of course topics.	40.4	45.9	13.8	1.73	109
Language					
Uses proper terminology.	25	43.8	31.3	2.06	112
Reading level is appropriate for students.	27	47.7	25.2	1.98	111
New terms are defined clearly.	32.4	44.1	23.4	1.91	111
Teaching and Learning Aids					
Study questions are appropriate for student level.	18.6	46	35.4	2.17	113
Unit introductions are well prepared.	17.9	56.3	25.9	2.08	112
Study questions are appropriate for course objectives.	24.3	50.5	25.2	2.01	111
Illustrations are useful in understanding the content.	27.9	46.8	25.2	1.97	111
Impact on Students					
The way content is presented motivates students.	29.7	55	15.3	1.86	111
Leads students to search for additional knowledge.	39.8	50	10.2	1.70	108
Leads students to think about the content.	42.7	48.2	9.1	1.66	110
Helps students develop interest toward the course.	49.1	41.1	9.8	1.61	112
Students find the textbook useful.	53.7	39.8	6.5	1.53	108
Helps students apply the content.	55	37.8	7.2	1.52	111
Assistance to Teacher					
Helpful in preparing lesson plans.	19	45.9	36.1	2.18	111
Helpful in preparing exam questions.	14.4	55	30.6	2.16	111
Helpful in deciding teaching materials.	29.1	49.1	21.8	1.93	110
Helpful in deciding teaching strategies.	40.7	42.6	16.7	1.76	108

Numbers in the table indicate percentages. In addition, the N's are based on the number of responses given for each individual item.

Physical aspects. As Table 1 presents, teachers find History textbooks durable, their cover pages attractive, typesize appropriate to some degree, indicating an average level of satisfaction with the textbooks in these aspects. In terms of durability, two-fifths of teachers agree that the textbook they use is durable while others are undecided or do not agree with this statement at all. Similarly, cover page is found attractive and typesize is found appropriate for students by only one-third of teachers while others are undecided or do not agree at all with these assertions. With regard to page layout and illustrations, teachers seem to be even less satisfied. Only one-fifth of the teachers say the textbooks are satisfactory in terms of page layout and illustrations, while the majority (about 80%) are either undecided or not happy with these aspects of History textbooks. Overall these questionnaire results indicate that teachers find the physical aspects of the textbooks problematic to a certain degree, and illustrations and the page layout need the most attention in this regard.

The interview results indicate certain reasons for teachers' unhappiness about the physical aspects of the textbooks. They find the binding not of good quality since it does not allow cover and pages to open flat. When students force the pages of the book open flat, the binding is broken easily and pages start falling down. In addition, they find the cover page quite thin and easy to wear. These two characteristics of the textbooks make them less durable. Since students are supposed to carry their textbooks home every day, the durability issue becomes even more important in judging the physical quality of a textbook. Therefore, teachers strongly recommend that the textbooks need to be durable both in terms of binding and cover page.

Teachers who were interviewed find the cover page quite dull, and predict that their students feel the same way. Typesize seems to be one of the less complained aspects. Teachers said that they did not think about whether the typesize or the kind of font used in the textbooks appropriate or not. However, they have a lot of complaints about the page layout in the textbooks. They say that the textbook publishers try to use as much space as they can on a page to decrease the total number of pages. As a result, most pages are full of text, illustrations are squeezed into small places devoted to them on pages in the textbook. Some of the teachers say that even encyclopedias have a better page layout than the textbooks. The pages are not colourful and not engaging in format and design. Of course this causes students to get tired and to lose interest in a short time. Teachers argue that the illustrations are not attractive at all. They say pictures are old, and not very clear. They think that students do not find these illustrations interesting and useful. Teachers indicate they have to bring in additional maps and photographs to class to supplement the ones in the textbooks.

Overall, the questionnaire and interview results indicate that the textbooks need to be made more durable and attractive in terms of illustrations, colours, and the page layout. These physical aspects help increase the interest of students in reading the textbook, and make a better self-study resource for them.

Content Selection and Presentation. As Table 1 shows, teachers are satisfied with the textbooks to some degree or less with regard to content selection and organization. Only one-fifth or fewer agree that the textbook they use provides sufficient coverage of course topics, fulfils course objectives, organizes the topics logically and presents the content clearly while others (four-fifths of more) are undecided or do not agree with these statements at all. When the mean scores are taken into consideration, the statement 'the topics are logically organized' receives the highest mean score, while other content-related statements have lower mean scores, indicating that teachers find textbooks problematic more so with regard to content coverage, fulfilling course objectives and clarity of content presentation than organization of topics.

Interview results indicate that teachers do not see much problem in textbooks in terms of covering the topics at a sufficient degree. However, they find the content presented too detailed. The topics are treated in a encyclopedia fashion. As a result the reading becomes difficult and boring. Teachers think that textbooks do not help children distinguish what is important from what is not so important.

The interviewed teachers complain that the way the content is presented in the textbooks is not attractive for students at all. According to the teachers, students often mention that the textbook is boring, and they find it difficult to read. Since the textbook covers the topics in a detailed way, in-depth discussion is ignored. As a result, the topics are dealt with in a superficial way, leading to memorization of the topics, rather than thinking about them.

Some interviewed teachers think that the content is not organized in a logical sequence. The textbooks they use do not provide sufficient continuity between lessons, chapters and units. This creates problems for students since they find it difficult to read the textbook from a holistic perspective, and see relationships among topics.

Finally interviewed teachers say that the textbooks fulfil the course objectives to a limited degree. Because of the problem areas explained above, they say that textbooks are not effectively used in the course.

These results show that the textbooks have problems in content organization and presentation. Although the content selected do not raise to much of an issue, the amount of content covered, the way content is presented, and the coherence among the topics seem to present problems. The textbooks writers need to pay attention to the order of topics, and the way they are presented in relation to each other, so that the student establishes connection among ideas and concepts presented in various units.

Language. As Table 1 presents, approximately one-fourth of teachers agree that 'reading level' in the textbook is appropriate for students and new terms are defined clearly while others are undecided or do not agree with these statements at all. Similarly, close to one-third think that proper terminology is used in the textbook while others are undecided or do not agree with this item at all. These results show that only about one-fourth or one-third

of teachers are satisfied with the use of language in the textbook while others are less satisfied or not satisfied at all.

Probably the reading level of a textbook is one of the most important criteria in judging the value of it for students' learning. Interviews indicate that teachers find the textbooks difficult to read for students. That seems to be one of the reasons for decreased level of student interest in reading the textbook. Teachers think that the sentences are too "long" and "complex," the flow of ideas is not suitable to critical reading, the terms used are not very clear, and the way sentences are constructed is confusing for students. Teachers even say that "the textbook writers need to take some writing lessons."

Use of proper terminology seems to be an important issue. Teachers mention certain problems with regard to the use of terms as well. Some teachers say that "old terminology is mostly used in the textbooks," and that makes the text for students more difficult to read and understand. New terms are not defined in the text, but definitions are presented at the end of the textbook. Some teachers say that this is not very helpful since students do not like to go to the end of the book to look at the glossary, and simply skip that section without understanding the concept well.

These results show that most teachers assess the language of the textbooks problematic as well. They find the reading level difficult, the terms are not selected carefully, new terms are not defined well. All these problems create difficulties for students in establishing an effective communication with the textbook.

Teaching and Learning Aids. As Table 1 displays, only one-fourth of teachers think that unit introductions are well prepared, illustrations are useful in understanding the content, and study questions are appropriate for course objectives while others either are undecided or do not agree at all with these statements. Similarly, a little more than one-third of teachers find study questions appropriate for student level while others are undecided or do not find them appropriate at all. These findings show that the limited teaching and learning aids in the textbook are either somewhat satisfying or not satisfying to most of the teachers.

Interviewed teachers mention that the textbooks do not include necessary aids to accompany the basic material. They say it would be quite helpful if they were provided with suggested readings, audiovisual aids and other library resources.

Teachers also suggest that the textbook should have a teacher manual stating the specific objectives for each unit, providing a list of materials and activities needed for each lesson, open and close end questions with answers, supplementary information about the content and its presentation, suggesting enrichment activities and exercises for students of varying interests.

Textbook is described as full of text, leaving little room for illustrations. Few in number, visuals like maps, photographs and graphics are not selected carefully. Sometimes it is

difficult to find relation between the text and the visual elements. The references to the visuals in the text are not provided adequately.

Illustrations are quite helpful if they are integrated into the content, attractive and up-to-date. From these aspects, the illustrations do not fulfil the intended overall purpose, which is drawing student interest and helping them learn the material more effectively. Illustrations do not seem to be appropriate for student interest and grade level. Some teachers complain that the pictures and maps used in the books are not up to date. Others complained about the placing of illustrations in the text. Some illustrations are placed away from the related content, others are not referenced properly in the text. Half of the teachers interviewed argue that more visuals need to be used to help students learn the content more effectively. As a result, the illustrations do not serve the purpose of helping students understand the content well.

The textbooks provide some test items at the end of the units. However teacher do not find them useful since they do not use objective tests in measuring student achievement. The open end questions are used by the teachers to some degree in the exams. Teachers acknowledge that the end-of-chapter questions are mostly at the knowledge level even though they prefer analysis and application questions more.

These results show that the textbooks do not provide teachers and students with effective teaching and learning aids. The aids provided like illustrations, questions are not found sufficient in making the textbook an effective teaching and learning resource.

Impact on Students. As Table 1 presents, teachers are less satisfied with the textbook they use in terms of its potential impact on students than its other aspects. Only less than 10% of the teachers think that students find the textbook helpful, that the textbook helps students apply the content, that the textbook leads students to think about the content, and that the textbook helps students develop interest toward the course while others either are undecided or do not agree with these items at all. Similarly, 10-15% of the teachers agree that the textbook leads students to search for additional knowledge, and that the way content is presented motivates students while others are undecided or do not agree with these statements. These findings show that a great majority of the teachers do not comfortably say that the textbook has a positive impact on students' thinking, application of content, searching for new knowledge, motivation and interest toward the course.

According to the interview results, teachers complain about inadequacy of the textbook in leading students to research and independent learning in the content area. They say that the textbook tries to provide all the answers. As a result, students see the textbook as a trustful source of information, and do not feel a need to look for other sources. Teachers suggest that the textbook should be a resource for students to organize their knowledge and should make them feel a need to search for additional information on certain topics.

Teachers argue that the textbook does not motivate students to think about the content at all. Since students find the textbook boring and difficult to read, they force themselves to

read and memorize. As a result, the knowledge gained by students does not become long-term and meaningful, according to teachers.

Teachers interviewed also argue that he textbook does not help students connect what they learn in History to today's' events. When the connection is missing, students are less interested in learning about History. In that sense, they suggest that the textbooks should relate the past to present through activities, questions and examples

Assistance to Teacher. As Table 1 shows, around one-third of the teachers find the textbook helpful in preparing lesson plans and exam questions while others are undecided or do not find it helpful at all. With regard to teaching strategies and teaching materials, teachers seem to receive less help from the textbook. Only around one-fifth of the teachers find the textbook helpful in deciding teaching strategies and materials while others are undecided or do not agree with these items. These results show that the textbook is somewhat helpful to teachers in preparing lesson plans and exam questions while it is not very helpful in deciding teaching strategies and materials.

Interview results point to similar conclusions. Teachers say that they make use of the textbook in preparing their instructional plans like yearly, unit and lesson plans, and in writing exam questions for assessing students' achievement especially in writing short-answer test questions. Teachers indicate that since the textbooks have to comply with the centralized History curriculum guideline, they use them in place of the curriculum and arrange their instructional planning accordingly. In this sense, textbook becomes a curriculum document for teachers and guides them in their instructional plans. Teachers mention extensive use of textbooks in writing questions for the exams since it is very pratical to refer to the content in the textbooks and this makes it easy and clear for the students to decide what and how to study.

Teachers acknowledge that they do not find the textbook helpful in deciding instructional strategies and selecting certain instructional materials to use in the classroom mainly because the textbook is not very rich in terms of teaching and learning aids. They suggest that textbooks should include tests, activities, ideas for further research for students, additional resources, visual materials like transparencies, videotapes, and teacher manuals. In this way textbooks can become more effective sources of instruction.

Teachers interviewed still see the textbook is the most important instructional medium used in the classroom. They say that the textbook influences to some degree what assignments students will be carrying out and how, what topics will be covered in the classroom and how, and how the student achievement is measured. Textbooks are seen as effective sources for preparing students for the university entrance exam. They recommend that the textbook writers should be more creative in presenting the subject matter rather than simply covering the course topics in a static manner. They argue that if an appropriate scope and sequence is adapted, topics are explored in-depth, and challenging activities and questions

are provided for students to develop higher order cognitive processes, the textbook will then be really effective for both teachers and students.

Students' Perceptions of Textbooks

The Student Questionnaire included several questions to explore students' perceptions of the History textbooks. Table 2 presents students' responses to these questions.

Table 2

Students' Views of Various Aspects of History Textbooks

ITEMS	Disagree (1)	Undecided (2)	Agree (3)	Mean	N
Physical appearance is satisfactory.	25.6	25.9	48.4	2.23	351
Illustrations are useful.	19.7	43.3	37.1	2.17	356
I find the content difficult to understand.	38.6	41.4	20	1.81	355
I find the language clear.	10	35.6	54.4	2.44	360
I find it difficult to relate the topics to each other.	21.3	32.9	45.8	2.44	356
Study questions are useful.	12.2	24.4	63.5	2.51	353
The way the topics are treated leads me to think.	34.1	43	22.9	1.89	358
The textbook increases my interest toward the course.	36.3	37.7	26	1.90	358

Numbers in the table indicate percentages. In addition, the N's are based on the number of responses given for each individual item.

As Table 2 displays, close to half of the students who responded to the questionnaire find the physical appearance of the textbook they use satisfactory while one-fourth are undecided with it and another one-fourth do not agree with this item at all. As the mean score indicates it is possible to say that the majority of the students do not complain about the physical appearance of the textbook they use. Group interviews with students present a somewhat different picture. Most students who were interviewed complain about the physical aspects of the textbook. They say that it is not durable, and the cover page and the page layout are not attractive at all. Overall, the group interviews indicate that students are happy with the physical aspects of the textbooks they use. This difference between the questionnaire and interview results may be due to students' misunderstanding of the question in the questionnaire. In the interviews, they may have better understood the intent of the question as a result of the discussion that took place during the group interview process.

More than one-third of the students agree that illustrations are helpful while others are undecided or do not agree with this statement at all. Again, the questionnaire findings indicate an average level of satisfaction with illustrations used in the textbooks. On the other hand interview findings indicate less satisfaction with the illustrations used in the textbooks. Students argue that the visuals are not selected well, they are not of good quality, and the

connection between the visuals and the text is not made effectively. As a result, the illustrations do not serve the intended purpose for the students.

Only one-fifth of the students find the content difficult to understand while two-fifths are undecided and others do not find it at all. Similarly, more than half of the students find the language of the textbook they use clear while others are undecided or do not agree with this item at all. These results indicate that students experience some degree of difficulty in understanding the content even though most find the language of the textbook clear. So, the difficulty in understanding the content may be the outcome of other features of the textbook. The group interviews explain some of these features. Students complain that the content is long and detailed, the ideas and events are not explored in depth. As a result, although students find the language of the textbook clear, the way content is presented creates some difficulties for students in understanding the content.

Another explanation for content difficulty may be students' perception of the connection among various topics in the textbook. Close to half of the students report that they have difficulty in relating the topics to each other. The group interviews also show that students do not see the topics presented in the textbooks in relation to each other. They say that the connection among these topics is not highlighted in the textbook, that the unit introductions and end-of-unit summaries are not very helpful in this regard. They place part of the blame on the way the course is taught as well. They say that their teachers do not highlight these connections properly in class.

Close to two-thirds of the students find the study questions in the textbook useful. Although teachers complained about the inadequacy of these questions in the responses they gave to the questionnaire and the interview questions, students seem to be satisfied overall with these questions. In the interviews, students say that these questions help them review what they read, prepare for teacher questions in class and for the exams. They say that teachers use similar types of questions in the exams, so they find it helpful to go over these questions before the exam.

Only a little more than one-fifth of the students agree that the way topics are presented leads them to think about the content while others are undecided or do not agree with that statement. This result shows that students are not motivated to think about the content as a result of their reading. Similar results were gained in the group interviews as well. Students say that the topics are treated in a detailed way, and the textbook does not leave room for them to think about the topic. The topics are presented in a encyclopedia fashion, and this leads them to passively reading and memorizing. Students find the presentation of the ideas and events "lifeless" and "static" and as a result they often find it difficult to concentrate on reading the text.

Finally students were asked whether the textbook increases their interest toward the course. A little more than one-fourth believe that the textbook increases their interest toward the course while others are undecided or do not agree with this statement at all. In the

interviews, students are divided on this issue. Some say they have more interest toward the course as a result of their experience with the textbook, while others do not think so.

In addition, students indicate that the teacher determines how they will use the textbooks in class and at home. They do readings at home and make summaries as assigned by the teacher, and use the textbook as a reading source in class as well. Teacher assigns the topics and pages to read, tell students to answer certain questions at the end of units, directing students' relation with the textbook along the objectives of the course. In that sense, students feel passive in the learning process from the textbook.

Students interviewed see the textbook as the most important instructional medium used in their classrooms, and accept that it has an invisible influence on the way the classroom activities are carried out. Therefore, they recommend that "the textbooks need to be more creative in presenting the subject matter, and should be more interesting and enjoyable to read."

Discussion

It is interesting that many of the teachers and students tend to choose the middle point 'undecided' for most items assessing various aspects of the History textbooks. Somehow, they avoid to choose the positive or negative ends of the continuum of the responses in the questionnaire. In the interviews, they seemed to be more open and descriptive of their perceptions of the textbooks. One other reason for the tendency to choose the middle response point in the questionnaires might be due to the three point response scale provided to the respondents. More options in the scale could have been helpful in decreasing the responses in the 'undecided' category. So this aspect of the study should be acknowledge as a limitation.

The results indicate that the physical aspects of History textbooks are judged as 'average' or 'less than average' by teachers and students. They have problems in terms of durability, attractiveness of the cover page, typesize, illustrations, and the page layout. Since cost seems to be a primary issue for the publishers, those aspects that would make a textbook attractive (e.g., illustrations, colours, page layout) are not given sufficient attention. Because of these problems, the textbooks are not interesting for students.

The History textbooks used in high schools cover too much information like encyclopedias, present the content in a way lacking a sound sequence of topics and ideas and avoiding in-depth discussions of important ideas and events, ignore the activities to develop students' capacities for critical thinking, and use little visuals.

Both the teachers and students indicate that the textbooks are designed for passive learning, transmission of facts rather than active involvement of learners in pursuit of knowledge and development of big ideas. The superficial and abstract treatment of topics leads to memorization rather than exploration of critical issues. Although the textbooks are

rich in covering a variety of topics, they are not treated in-depth resulting superficial and simplistic survey of many issues rather than understanding the core ideas. Treatment of topics tends to be uninteresting. Students find the presentation of the ideas and events "lifeless" and "static," and as a result, they often find it difficult to concentrate on reading the text. Furthermore, fragmentation of subject matter seems to be a problem since students and teachers agree that the connections between events and ideas are often ignored in the textbooks. This creates difficulty for students in relating the topics to each other, and establish a meaningful set of interconnected ideas in relation to history.

The textbooks are criticized heavily in terms of the language used. Especially, interview results indicated that students find it very difficult to read and understand the content, and the teachers confirm that the reading level in the textbooks is not appropriate mainly because of the writing style adapted (long and complicated sentence structures, the flow of the ideas, etc.).

The textbooks appear to be poor in terms of offering activities and questions for developing students' critical thinking skills, and improving a positive attitude toward History course. Textbooks make use of questions at the end of each section, but with a very little focus on use of knowledge or generation of big ideas based on facts. They are mostly low-level cognition questions and ask for recall of information in the text. Activities for using the knowledge learned are almost non-existing. Introductions to sections, guiding questions and end of chapter summaries are found ineffective and unfriendly by both teachers and students.

Students do not find the textbook helpful and effective in many respects like thinking about the content further, searching additional information about the course topics, applying the content. Teachers find the textbook effective for preparing instructional plans and exam questions while not so helpful in deciding the instructional strategies and materials. Although the textbooks have the problems outlined above, still they have an important influence on the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Both teachers and students seem to agree that the textbook is the most important instructional medium used in their classrooms, and they have an invisible influence on the way the classroom activities are carried out. Therefore, they recommend that the textbook writers need to be more creative in presenting the subject matter rather than simply covering the topics specified in the Ministry curriculum guidelines in a static manner. Some other recommendations include adapting an appropriate scope and sequence, in-depth exploration of important events and challenging activities and questions for students to develop higher order cognitive processes and skills like critical thinking and decision making.

Studying the effectiveness of textbooks in History courses in high schools is important from several perspectives. First, there has been a common dissatisfaction with History courses in high schools among both students and teachers. This study uncovers some of the distinctive characteristics of the History textbooks through the perspectives of teachers and students. These findings may help textbook writers understand the major weaknesses of the current

textbooks and how they impact teachers and students. Second, textbooks tend to be the dominant instructional material used in History teaching. Therefore, an examination of widely-used textbooks is likely to indicate important strengths and weaknesses of high school history teaching process. Finally, this study shows the importance of receiving feedback from teachers and students, those who experience the textbook directly. Teachers and students are generally considered to have little influence over textbooks since they have no organized communication channels for expressing their instructional needs and wants. In this respect, this study may offer important insights from teachers and students which may be helpful in designing textbooks.

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